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March 15, 2005

SOLDIERS OF V CORPS' 22ND SIGNAL BRIGADE GET HEALTHY DOSE OF REALISM IN LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE

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GRAFENWOEHR TRAINING AREA, Germany – V Corps' 32nd Signal Battalion recently went through the most realistic training that Army safety policy allows.



PFC MICHAEL HOWARD

Locked and loaded, Pfc. Geoffrey Cooper of V Corps' B Company, 32nd Signal Battalion, hefts his M-249 squad automatic weapon as he prepares to fire at a group of pop-up targets during the 32nd's recent convoy live-fire training exercise at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area.

It's called a convoy live-fire exercise. In the CLFX, the 32nd's Soldiers combined vehicle convoy procedures with live ammunition, pop-up targets, and smoke grenades in a 3-hour exercise that simulates combat as closely as possible.

"The purpose is to learn, rehearse, and practice the convoy battle drills so we can be

better prepared for an attack downrange. This is a proof-of-concept exercise for V Corps. If they like what they see, what we're doing could become the training standard for all of (U.S. Army Europe)," claimed Capt. Brad G. Kittinger, commander of the battalion's A Company.

Though a CLFX is among the most difficult and intense exercises, equally intense training and preparation helped make the exercise a success.

"We've been training since January. We haven't had a great deal of time, but as soon as we found out we would be doing this exercise, we began training at our home station in preparation. We actually did a weeklong practice exercise in Hanau. We instructed the Soldiers on the fundamentals and built up to the battle drills," Kittinger added.

"Overall, it was excellent. I was really impressed by the speed with which the Soldiers caught on. They really seemed to enjoy the training. They were excited because this has so much practical application when they go downrange."

Spc. Alex H. Hutson, a radio transmission systems operator-maintainer with the battalion's B Company, apparently agreed.

"This exercise did more than just prepare me. It has given me the opportunity to see what it's actually like to be in the situation. I think a lot of Soldiers, to include myself, got a lot of experience. This is the best field exercise that I ever had."

The proof-of-concept is a step in the right direction, according to Hutson.

"I think it's a great idea, because we're all infantry soldiers first. ... And I think this exercise reflects that. I think it's great that we're learning the tactics that could save our lives in a real-world situation. We go downrange, too. We go on convoys, too. There are no rear lines. It's a new kind of war."

